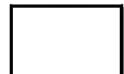


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MEMORANDUM FOR: General Cabell

Mr. Dulles would like your views
on attached. He is inclined to sign
letter in present form.

*concur
CPC*



27 Feb

(DATE)

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V. C. S.
The Honorable Paul Nitze
Assistant Secretary of Defense for International
Security Affairs
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C.

Dear Paul:

I hope that SNSA 58-61, "Probable Communist Reaction to Certain US Courses of Action with Respect to Laos", which the intelligence community undertook at your request will serve your immediate needs.

I would like to suggest, however, that we do not let the matter rest here. My fear, which is shared by other members of the Board, is that the short time range of the assumptions underlying the paper focusses our attention on aspects of the Laotian situation other than those likely to be decisive in the long run. The intelligence community seems to be agreed that the communists intend to move at a rather leisurely pace in Laos. If this is correct we may find ourselves six months from now in exactly the same position we are today -- ruling out certain courses of action because they require advance preparations for which there is no time. We feel that a somewhat broader study, focussed on the more basic and decisive aspects of the situation, might help you to make the kind of advance preparations that would permit more effective action later. I am thinking of such things as (1) the ability of the PAV (Forces Armees Laotiennes) to maintain sufficient discipline and morale over a confused and discouraging long haul, and (2) the effects of various possible longer range measures to shore up the combat and security capabilities of the non-communist side in Laos.

(EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, U.S. Defense) (S)

If you think there is merit in this idea, ISA, State Intelligence and Policy Officers, and CIA could informally talk over a longer range set of possible steps -- changing the status of the Program Evaluations Officers, training mixed Lao-Thai guerrilla teams, and other conceivable measures of this sort -- and give the intelligence community a fuller set of possible US sponsored measures to examine.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director

Drafted by INR (State)RHilsman (25 Feb. 61)
First para. redrafted by ONE:SKent (28 Feb. 61)

Distribution:

Original and 1 - addressee
Mr. Roger Hilsman, INR, State
Signer's file ✓
Secretary, USIB
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